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EX-CIA LATIN AMERICA CHIEF SAYS INTERVENTION INEVITABLE
MOSCOW, IDAHO

Former CIA Director William Colby Monday defended American covert activities in foreign nations, saying the alternative at times is to "send in the Marines."

"The alternative of using a small covert action operation in Guatamela in 1954, in the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, or assisting Guatamelans or Cubans who try to achieve a change in their government, is to send in the Marines," Colby told a University of Idaho audience attending a symposium on the CIA's involvement in Latin America.

"Now you can say we shouldn't send the Marines -- I can understand that -- but does that mean you can do nothing?" he asked.

"I think the question is the wisdom of a particular action and not a general denunciation of the activity," Colby said.

Colby said the CIA's budget for covert activity is now rebounding toward its Cold War level.

"There was a tremendous surge of covert action during the 1950s Cold War," he said. "Roughly half the budget during that period was devoted to covert action. That declined by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s to about 3 or 4 percent of the total budget.

"Obviously it has gone back (to more covert action) to some degree since then, because of, for one thing, the change in American attitudes as reflected by the defeat of the Carter administration and the ascension of the Reagan administration, which has a different attitude about these things."

Earlier Monday, a man who once headed the CIA's operations in Latin America said no president can avoid authorizing clandestine intervention into the activities of other nations.

"American presidents, generally speaking, are going to elect to use covert activities to further their goals," David Phillips said.

"Obviously, it depends on the president, but any president, I think, will use it under certain circumstances.

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